

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am returning Assembly Bill 741 without my signature.

While I strongly support the provision of prenatal care and family planning services and have secured a waiver to access hundreds of millions in federal funds to protect these important services, I cannot sign this bill as it would increase General Fund costs at a time of continuing budget challenges. This bill highlights a very important issue – the high incidence of low birth weight babies in the African American community and proposes an innovative, community based approach to address this public health challenge. While I cannot support this bill, I share the author's concern and am directing the California Department of Public Health to evaluate the effectiveness of the Black Infant Health Program and develop options, within existing resources, to strengthen state and local efforts, including expanding the focus on interpregnancy care, by March 31, 2008.

For the reasons mentioned above, I am unable to support this measure at this time. I believe this policy can be more appropriately addressed during the budget process.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger